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ABSTRACT

While sex-role identification and conflict have been cited as factors in alcoholism, only a few studies have used the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) to measure the feminine, masculine, and androgynous traits of alcoholics. One such study was replicated by having subjects rate both their real and ideal selves. A randomized factorial analysis used sex and alcoholism as the independent variables. Sex-role conflict played no significant role, since differences between real and ideal were minimal, with both male and female subjects desiring increased masculinity, but not femininity. Since both alcoholic men and women score low on masculinity, clinical therapy geared toward attaining masculine traits appears appropriate. The study results also suggest either that androgyny is more healthy for females than males, or that larger quantities of masculine traits may be healthier for everybody. Further study of sex roles and psychological health, using both sexes, would be necessary due to the fluidity of the ideal sex role. (Author/LS)

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Femininity, Masculinity and Androgyny in Male and Female Alcoholics

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Sex-role identification and conflict have been cited as factors in alcoholism for both males and females (Wilsnack, 1973; Gomberg, 1976). Few studies of alcoholics have used the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) which measures femininity and masculinity independently and also measures their combination, androgyny. According to Bem (1974, 1975), androgynous individuals are psychologically more healthy than sex-typed individuals. Jones, Chernovetz and Hansson (1978), however, found that flexibility and adjustment are generally associated with masculinity rather than androgyny for both males and females. Androgynous males exhibited more problem drinking than masculine males, while females did not differ. Beckman (1978), using the BSRI with female subjects only, found alcoholic females to be significantly less masculine and less androgynous than controls. Hunter and Hannon (Note 1), using female and male subjects, found both male and female alcoholics to be both significantly less masculine and less feminine than controls on the BSRI, suggesting that alcoholics see themselves as possessing a lesser degree of various personality traits regardless of sex-typing. Alcoholic females were significantly less androgynous than control females, but alcoholic males were significantly more androgynous than controls who were clearly male sex-typed, suggesting that androgyny may be a healthy state for females but not for males. The purpose of the present experiment was to extend and replicate Hunter and Hannon,

and to directly assess sex-role conflict by having subjects rate both their real and ideal selves (in counterbalanced order) on the BSRI.

The subjects were 50 clients of the San Joaquin County Alcoholic Rehabilitation Clinic and, because only 11 of these were females, 12 female members of Alcoholics Anonymous were also recruited. The 91 control subjects were students at San Joaquin Delta College and Woodruff Regional Occupational Center. (All these facilities are in Stockton, California.) Questionnaires were administered to groups of subjects with standardized instructions. Subjects were not aware that they were taking a sex-roles inventory. The forms were entitled, "Personality Traits Questionnaire". At the end of the questionnaire, subjects were asked to indicate their age, education, income and ethnic status.

The demographic characteristics of the subjects in each group are presented in Table 1. None of the demographic variables correlated significantly with any of the dependent measures. The basic measures analyzed were Masculinity, Femininity, Social Desirability and Androgyny Ideal scores, and Masculinity, Femininity, Social Desirability and Androgyny Real scores. The difference between Ideal and Real scores for each measure was also analyzed. Each of the 12 dependent measures was analyzed using a 2 x 2 completely randomized factorial analysis of variance with sex and alcoholism as the independent variables. The data are presented in Figures 1-4. All significant differences are indicated on the Figures.

The following conclusions were drawn from the results:

1) There was no support for the sex-role conflict theory of the etiology of alcoholism, as no significant difference was found between control and alcoholic subjects' Real and Ideal difference scores.

2) Both male and female subjects desire masculine traits, as there was no significant difference between the sexes in Ideal Masculinity scores. On the Real and Ideal difference score, males show a desire for greater masculinity and the difference score for females is even larger than for males. On the other hand, neither male nor female subjects show a desire for increased femininity.

3) Since this study and several previous investigations have found alcoholic men and women to score low on masculinity, the treatment of alcoholism through assertiveness training and other techniques geared toward the attainment of masculine traits appears to be an appropriate clinical strategy.

4) Regarding psychological health, the results of the present study suggest a) that androgyny may be a more healthy state for females (control females were more androgynous while alcoholic females were more feminine) as Bem suggests, but not for males (control males were more masculine while alcoholic males were more androgynous), or b) that possessing larger quantities of masculine traits may be healthier for everybody, as Jones et al. suggest, since the results for androgyny in the present study can also be interpreted as indicating that control subjects of both sexes possess relatively more masculine traits than do alcoholics.

5) Since the ideal sex role is currently in a state of flux, continued investigations of sex roles and psychological health will be necessary. Such investigations will have to study both sexes to draw accurate conclusions about what is specific to each sex.

Table 1

Percentage of Subjects in Each Group Falling Into Each Demographic Category

	Female Control	Female Alcoholic	Male Control	Male Alcoholic
Age				
18-25	34.6	17.4	59.0	17.9
25-35	38.5	34.8	30.8	41.0
35-45	26.9	47.8	10.3	41.0
Education				
did not attend high school	0.0	4.3	0.0	2.6
attended high school but have not finished	3.8	8.7	10.3	35.9
finished high school	17.3	13.0	23.1	20.5
attended college but have not finished 4 year degree	76.9	60.9	64.1	35.9
finished 4 years college	1.9	4.3	2.6	0.0
attended graduate school	0.0	8.7	0.0	5.1
Income				
less than $5,000 a year	32.7	52.2	41.0	28.2
$5,000-9,999 a year	23.1	17.4	17.9	17.9
$10,000-14,999 a year	13.5	13.0	25.6	30.8
$15,000-19,999 a year	5.8	8.7	7.7	15.4
$20,000-24,999 a year	17.3	0.0	7.7	7.7
$25,000 or more a year	7.7	8.7	0.0	0.0
Ethnic Background				
White	78.8	73.9	48.7	61.5
Black	1.9	0.0	7.7	12.8
Mexican-American	1.9	21.7	23.1	23.1
Oriental	5.8	0.0	10.3	0.0
Other	11.5	4.3	10.3	2.6
Sample size	52	23	39	39

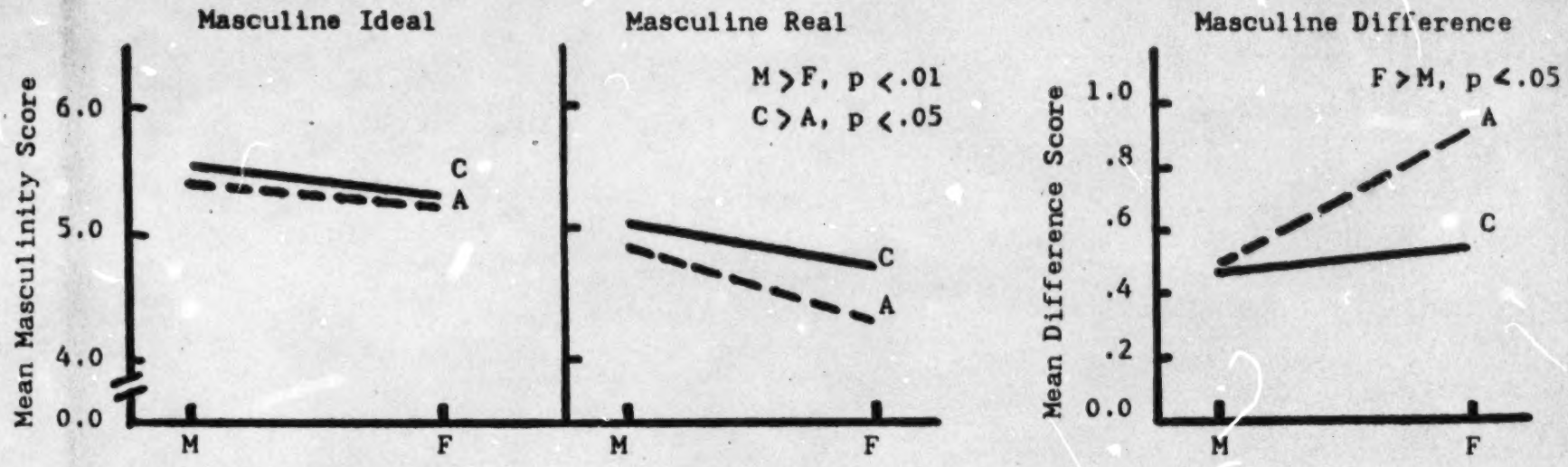

Figure 1. Masculine Ideal, Masculine Real, and Masculine Difference (Ideal minus Real) mean scores as a function of sex (M = Male, F = Female) and Alcoholism (C = Control, A = Alcoholic).

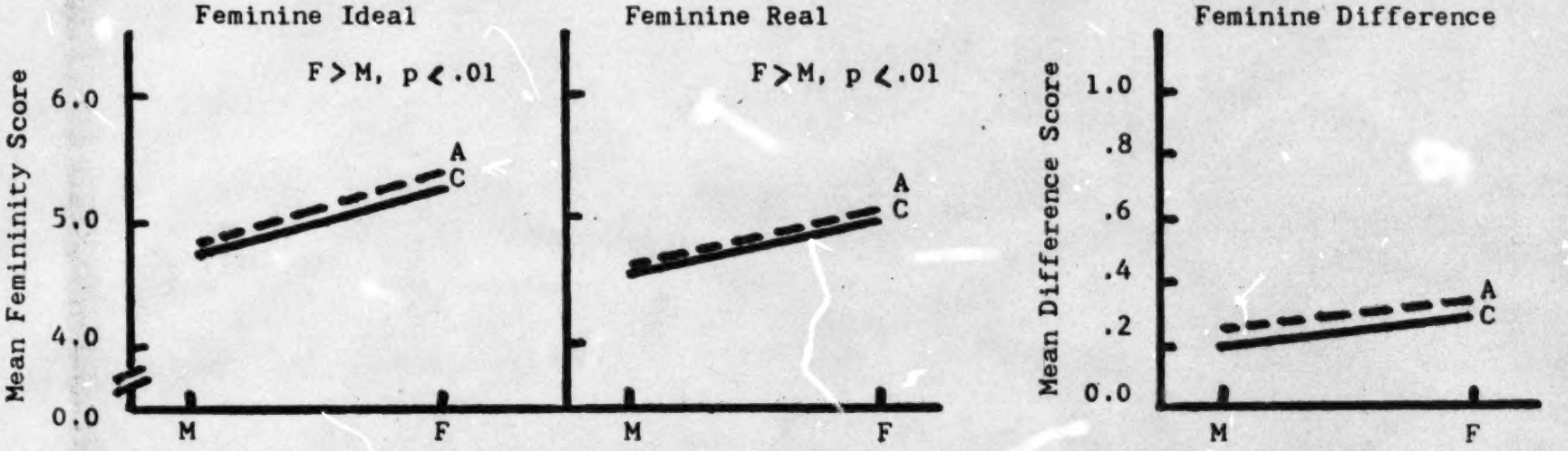

Figure 2. Feminine Ideal, Feminine Real, and Feminine Difference (Ideal minus Real) mean scores as a function of Sex and Alcoholism.

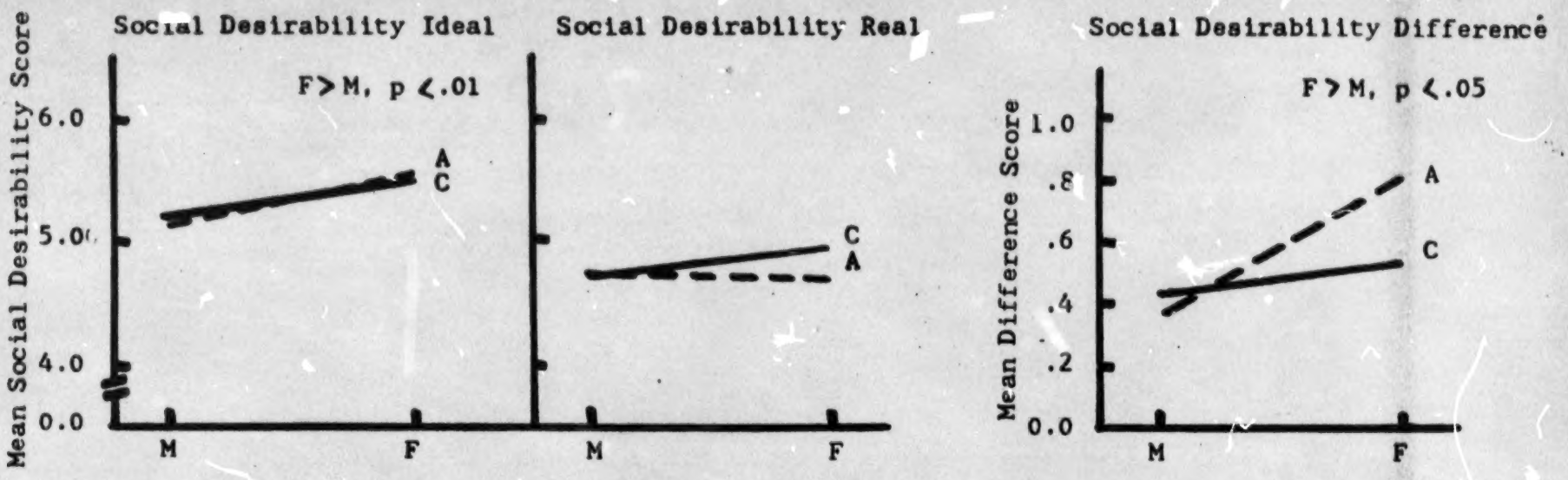

Figure 3. Social Desirability Ideal, Social Desirability Real, and Social Desirability Difference (Ideal minus Real) mean scores as a function of Sex and Alcoholism.

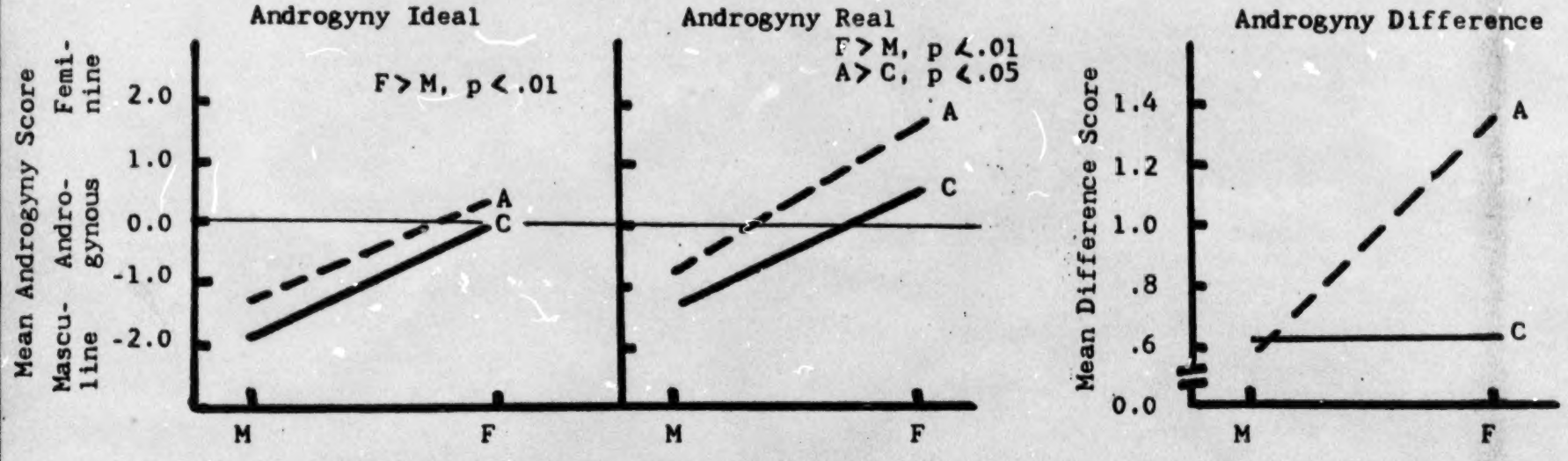

Figure 4. Androgyny (Mean Feminine minus Mean Masculine 2.322) Ideal, Androgyny Real, and Androgyny Difference (Ideal minus Real) mean scores as a function of Sex and Alcoholism.

Reference Notes

1. Hunter, P., & Hannon, R. Psychological androgyny in female and male alcoholics. Paper presented at the Western Psychological Association Convention, San Francisco, Ca., 1977.

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